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Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 /011 R

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DRAFTED BY: S/S-O:GTWOHIE
APPROVED BY: S/S-O:GTWOHIE
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O 280005Z DEC 74 ZFF4
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USDEL DORADO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 282878

EXDIS TOSEC 27

FOLLOWING REPEAT PHNOM PENH 17212 ACTION SECSTATE 27 DEC

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 17212

EXDIS

E.O. 11652:GDS
TAGS: PINT,CB
SUBJECT: LONG BORET AND SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ BURY HATCHET

1. ON DECEMBER 27 I HELD INTIMATE LUNCHEON FOR PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET AND FANK COMMANDER IN CHIEF LTG SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ, IN AN EFFORT TO BRING THEM TO A PLEDGE TO WORK TOGETHER OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

2. ALTHOUGH THE TWO MEN HAD BEEN FRIENDS FOR SOME YEARS, AN INCIDENT OF A PERSONAL NATURE,WHICH AROSE SHORTLY BEFORE LONG BORET'S LAST TRIP TO THE UN THIS FALL, CAUSED A BREACH WHICH TURNED OUT TO BE EVEN DEEPER THAN I HAD REALIZED. THIS WAS ESPECIALLY TRUE ON THE SIDE OF THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO HAD FELT HIMSELF DEEPLY INSULTED BY SOSTHENE. TODAY, IN AN OCCASIONALLY EMOTIONAL THREE-HOUR SESSION,THERE
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WAS A CHANCE FOR BOTH TO GET IT OUT OF THEIR SYSTEM: LONG BORET

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TO MAKE CLEAR TO SOSTHENE HOW DEEP HAD BEEN THE WOUND,
AND SOSTHENE TO EXPRESS HIS SURPRISE AND HIS BELIEF
THAT THE MISUNDERSTANDING HAD BEEN CLEARED UP LONG AGO
AS A RESULT OF HIS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE APOLOGIES, AND
EFFECTIVELY FORGOTTEN.

3. I SAID THAT I BELIEVED 1975 WOULD BE THE CRITICAL
YEAR FOR NEGOTIATIONS, THAT THESE TWO REPRESENTED THE
TWO INSTITUTIONS WHICH COUNTED IN THE COUNTRY (GOVERN-
MENT AND ARMED FORCES),THAT IF THEY WORK TOGETHER IN
A SPIRIT OF TRUST AND COOPERATION, NO OTHER FORCE CAN
STAND AGAINST THEM--AND NEITHER WOULD NEED TO SEEK THE
SUPPORT OF ANY OTHER ELEMENT (ALTHOUGH LON NON'S NAME
WAS NOT MENTIONED IN THIS CONTEXT,THE MEANING WAS CLEAR).

4. I BELIEVE THE MEETING RESULTED IN REAL PROGRESS,
WITH EACH UNDERSTANDING BETTER THE POSITIONS AND HANGUPS
OF THE OTHER, SUCH AS SOSTHENE'S PERSONAL STRONG BIAS
AGAINST THIS PARTICULAR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. SOSTHENE
PROMISED THE PRIME MINISTER HIS COMPLETE PERSONAL
SUPPORT, INCLUDING SOME FORM OF PUBLIC GESTURE OF
SUCH SUPPORT IN ORDER TO SILENCE LOCAL RUMOR MILLS.
IT WAS ALSO AGREED THAT PRIME MINISTER WOULD RECEIVE
A WEEKLY CLASSIFIED BRIEFING ON MILITARY SITUATION, IN
MANY DETAILS OF WHICH HE IS SURPRISINGLY INNOCENT.

5. SOSTHENE, IN BREAKFAST MEETING A DAY OR SO AGO WITH
NEW ACTING DEFENSE MINISTER HOU HONG,HAD INDICATED
HIS AGREEMENT THAT BUDGETARY CONTROL ON MILITARY SIDE
SHOULD BE EXERCISED WITHIN AND BY MINISTRY OF DEFENSE,
WHICH HAD BEEN IMPOSSIBLE UNDER THE CORRUPT AND WEAK
THAPPANA NGINN. LONG BORET WAS PLEASED WITH THIS,AND
I MADE SUGGESTION THAT THE CIVILIAN DEFENSE MINISTER
HAVE ONE OR TWO MILITARY DEPUTIES WHO WOULD HAVE CON-
FIDENCE OF BOTH SOSTHENE AND THE MINISTER (AND BY
EXTENSION OF PRIME MINISTER).

6. THE TWO MEN PARTED WITH WARM HANDSHAKE AND AFTER
PRIME MINISTER HAD OFFERED TO CONSULT WITH CINC FANK
ON CABINET COMPOSITION AND PROGRAM BEFORE PRESENTING
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HIMSELF BEFORE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. AT THIS MEETING
LONG BORET ALSO INDICATED TO SOSTHENE THAT (A) HE
WOULD NOT BROADEN CABINET BY INCLUSION OF REPUBLICAN
MINISTERS BECAUSE OF THEIR REFUSAL TO DEFEND THEIR MIN-
ISTERIES BEFORE ASSEMBLY, (B) MINISTERIAL RESHUFFLE
WOULD BE MINIMAL, (C) EMPHASIS WOULD BE ON AUSTERITY
PROGRAM INCLUDING NEW TAXES, RETIREMENT OF GENERALS,
ETC. AND THAT SOME ACTIONS WOULD BE TAKEN BEFORE

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LONG BORET APPEARED BEFORE ASSEMBLY IN ORDER ENHANCE
CREDIBILITY OF HIS PROGRAM.

7. COMMENT: BRINGING THESE TWO MEN TOGETHER IS BEST
WAY TO NEUTRALIZE LON NON FOR TIME BEING.
DEAN UNQUOTE BROWN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TOSEC 27, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE282878
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: O:GTWOHIE
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740376-0510
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974126/aaaaaeue.tel
Line Count: 121
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31 JUL 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <30 DEC 2002 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LONG BORET AND SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ BURY HATCHET
TAGS: PINT, CB, (LONG BORET), (SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ)
To: DORADO
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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